

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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CLEAR LAKE YELLOW BASS PROVIDE ICE FISHING BONANZA

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CLEAR LAKE--For a lot of Iowans, the last half of January can be rather depressing. You know, mid-winter blues.

Pheasant season has ended. There's no snow for skiing, sledding, or snowmobiling, and the spring turkey seasons are still months away. What's an outdoor enthusiast to do?

Well, one suggestion might be to grab your ice fishing gear and head to Cerro Gordo county's Clear Lake where burgeoning populations of yellow bass are currently stealing the mid-winter show. Currently, it just might be the hottest action in the state.

Ice fishing success has remained so consistent here this winter that anglers from across much of the state are continuing to travel to this 3,600-acre hot spot to claim their share of the action.

"The fishing [for yellow bass] really took off during the first week of December and has stayed good since then," said DNR Fisheries Technician, Scott Grummer. "The fishing began in the west end of the lake near Ventura, but before long the yellows were on the move and began migrating east. A good number of anglers have been following them ever since."

The largest concentration of yellow bass, and consequently the best fishing, is currently located in an area between The Island and the lake's north shore. Most schools are roaming in 10 to 12 feet of water. The foraging fish are not relating to specific habitats, such as rock reefs, but are cruising the flats in search of their favorite invertebrate foods.

"Locating fish on the flats presents a challenge, and is often hit or miss," said Grummer. "I've seen where one party is catching one fish after another while anglers just 100 yards away aren't having a bite. It really pays to keep moving until you hit an active school."

First light and last light, are when yellows bite best. Light line, small jigging spoons, cut bait or small minnows work best. Schools are almost always found at or near the bottom. The same is true for the bonus walleye or crappies you might encounter while in search of bass.

The daily, sunrise/sunset feeding frenzies may last thirty or forty minutes -- sometimes up to an hour. But when it's hot it's hot, and most anglers find it difficult to keep up with two rods. When the frenzy ends, it is not uncommon to have 30 or 40 fat bass, and maybe even a bonus walleye or two, flopping on the ice.

"It's been an extremely mild winter, and ice fishing opportunities have been very limited across much of the state," said DNR Fisheries Biologist, Jim Wahl. "Right now, I think people are desperate to fish. It seems that ice fishermen are especially willing to travel to find good angling, and we've had pretty consistent success for a long period of time. The word is out, and people are coming from all over the state to fish here."

During the 2003 [open water] season, anglers harvested more than 230,000 yellow bass from Clear Lake. But in spite of the extreme pressure, biologists say that hook and line fishing has had no impact on yellow bass numbers. In fact, a Clear Lake yellow bass is much more likely to die of old age -- which normally occurs when a fish reaches 7 or 8 years of age -- than it is to reach the frying pan.

"There's no better fish on the table, and this is one species where an angler never needs to feel bad about taking home a huge catch. Yellow bass densities are so great that hook and line mortality just doesn't have an impact."

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IOWA RIVER CORRIDOR BIRD CONSERVATION AREA TOPIC OF PUBLIC MEETING

BOONE - The Iowa River Corridor and its potential designation as the latest in Iowa's Bird Conservation Area (BCA) system are topics for a public meeting set for Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Belle Plaine Community Center, 1207 8th Ave. The meeting is scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m.

Bird Conservation Areas are a relatively new concept for Iowa. Each BCA consists of a large landscape "matrix", consisting of a core of public land or permanently protected bird habitat, and surrounded by large areas of private land exhibiting additional suitable habitat. Core public lands are managed intensively for all wild birds, especially those varieties realizing regional or continental population declines. DNR wildlife biologists and private lands specialists work with willing landowners to find ways of improving their properties for birds. The program is entirely voluntary, non-regulatory, and could result in extra incentives for landowners to make bird habitat improvements.

Four Iowa sites have been officially designated to date: Kellerton Grasslands BCA in Ringgold County, Broken Kettle Grasslands BCA north of Sioux City, Spring Run Grassland-Wetland BCA near Spirit Lake, and Effigy Mounds-Yellow River Forest BCA in northeast Iowa. Union Hills Grassland-Wetland BCA near Mason City is in final stages of development. Each landscape hosts a unique group of bird life, many of which have suffered notable declines in numbers prior to increased conservation efforts.

"The Iowa River Corridor, with its existing large acreage of lands protected under public ownership and private conservation easements, represents the perfect candidate for Iowa's next Bird Conservation Area," said Bruce Ehresman, DNR wildlife diversity biologist. "This is very significant, given the corridor's resident Sandhill Cranes, Barn Owls, Northern Harriers and other uncommon bird species."

Doug Harr, who coordinates the DNR's wildlife diversity program agrees.

"The Iowa River and surrounding uplands, from above Chelsea to the Amana Colonies, hosts a remarkable assemblage of birds and a great variety of habitats—grasslands, forests, and floodplain wetlands. With all the flood control and conservation efforts already in place here, I can't think of a better location for Iowa's next BCA," Harr said.

Anyone interested in bird conservation, bird watching, and improved natural resource management is encouraged to attend the public meeting. For further details, contact bruce.ehresman@dnr.state.ia.us (515-432-2823), doug.harr@dnr.state.ia.us (515-281-4815), or rick.trine@dnr.state.ia.us (515-752-5521).

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WHY PLANT IOWA GROWN NATIVE TREES?

Successful tree and shrub plantings provide a number of environmental benefits. These benefits include increased food and cover for wildlife, decreased wind and water erosion, improved water quality, enhanced natural beauty, increased recreational opportunities, and potential financial gain through the production of wood fiber. However, for a planting to provide any of these benefits, it must be successful.

It is best to utilize Iowa adapted and Iowa grown tree and shrub seedlings to improve the chances for a successful planting project. Iowa adapted seedlings are better suited to Iowa's extremes in weather and Iowa planting sites. Iowa grown trees and shrubs will also be less stressed than non-native seed source plant material and be more resistant to destructive insect and disease attacks.

“Locally adapted plant material provides a solid foundation on which a successful planting can be built,” said Paul Tauke, forestry supervisor for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Tauke cautioned that even though a tree or shrub species is native to Iowa it does not necessarily mean that the plant material used in every case is from an Iowa seed source.

“Bur oak, for example, which is native to Iowa, has a native range stretching from southern Texas to southern Canada. However, it would be a poor practice to plant a bur oak seedling from Texas or even central Missouri in Iowa. It simply will not tolerate our weather and site conditions as well as our naturally adapted Iowa bur oaks. It will also be more likely to develop insect, disease and mortality problems,” Tauke said. He added that the problems associated with planting unsuitable stock may not be apparent for several years.

The best way to insure that the plant material is from an Iowa adapted seed source is to purchase seedlings from Iowa Nurseries. For a list of nurseries providing Iowa grown plant material log on to www.iowatreeplanting.com or contact Forestry Supervisor Paul Tauke at paul.tauke@dnr.state.ia.us or at 515/242-6898.

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MOUNTAIN LIONS IN IOWA

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Sometimes, it's a shadowy form at dusk. Perhaps a quick glimpse through the brush. Over the last few years, wildlife biologist Ron Andrews has logged more than 200 reports from people who believe they saw a mountain lion in Iowa.

It is hard evidence, though; a clear track, droppings or a photograph that is needed for a confirmed sighting. Now, over the last three months, two mountain lions—or cougars-- have been killed; one in Wayne County in southern Iowa, the other in the

northwest corner of the state in Sioux County. A couple years ago, one was hit and killed by a car, near Harlan in western Iowa. The evidence doesn't get any more solid than that.

So, *are* there mountain lions in Iowa?

"That is certainly the case with (those) three animals," agrees Andrews, the Department of Natural Resources' furbearer biologist. "We also have a half dozen reports of what seem to be mountain lion tracks. Then, we have numerous reports from people who think they've seen mountain lions; some of which are probably true...others which are not."

Julie and Todd Hauser of Solon fall into that 'unconfirmed' category. But they know what they watched for about ten seconds, November 29 near the west edge of Solon, close to Lake Macbride. "It was stopped, a couple hundred yards away from us, as we walked the dog in a field," recalls Julie Hauser. "Todd first said, 'there's a deer'. Then, it started running, with it's ears held the way cats do. With the long tail, we knew what it was."

Late the next day, about four miles south of there, Mike Brown was pulling into home, just off Highway 1. In the fading daylight, his headlights accented an animal in the ravine. "I saw something move," recalls Brown. "It ran down the side of the ravine and turned. I saw it for maybe five to eight seconds. I know it was a mountain lion. It was darker than I would have thought, but it *was* a mountain lion." Brown was skeptical two years ago, when his wife and daughter thought they saw a cougar in the wooded ravine. Not anymore.

Want more? Six days later, a deer hunter stared at a mountain lion track, as he stepped over a fence, six miles northwest of Solon. It was rounded, five or six inches across; with no claw marks showing; unlike a canine print. "I know a mountain lion track," he emphasized. And those are just recent incidents from one county.

Andrews doesn't disagree. "People are convinced they have seen these animals. We have no reason to say they haven't. We need hard evidence, though, to confirm it." The recent cougar carcasses are the most obvious proof. Clear paw prints, droppings, a photo or video would also settle the issue.

Years ago, when told of a big cat sighting, a wildlife biologist or conservation officer would pay a trip to the local guy who kept a mountain lion in a cage 'out back'. More often than not, they would discover that the cat had strayed. Now, they look to the west. "States west and south of Iowa are experiencing the same phenomenon," notes Andrews. "These are young males, pushed out of the territory by older males. They're just kind of wandering. It's real easy for a mountain lion to move 50, 60, even 70 miles in one night." With the extensive creek-to-river system in southern Iowa, it would take little effort to follow those corridors far from home.

Often, captive cougars are declawed and have telltale tooth wear. Not the recent cats, though. “These animals all had nice, sharp claws...very good teeth,” confirms Andrews. “They are very likely wild animals. Still, there are a number of mountain lions in captivity. I’m sure, on occasion, some escape, too.”

Are they here to stay? “In the short term, I believe the sightings could increase,” forecasts Andrews. “We will probably have more sightings, others shot (it is not illegal to shoot a mountain lion). For the long term? That’s a good question.”

Sidebar: Mountain Lion Myth Debunked

Maybe you’ve heard the rumor, too. You know, the one where ‘they’ say the Department of Natural Resources is releasing mountain lions to control the deer herd. I hear it from somebody every couple weeks or so. If you want to believe it, stop reading right now.

“The DNR did not, has not released any mountain lions in the state of Iowa,” states DNR wildlife biologist Ron Andrews. “In fact, if they think about it a little bit, politically it would be a real unwise thing to do. The public should realize that we have a little more sense than that.”

Sorry to burst your bubble. Andrews concedes that lions may be following the increase of deer herds throughout the Midwest, but says that’s as close as that connection gets.

Another explanation may come from the expanded sightings of bobcats in the last decade. The smaller bobcats (20-25 pounds, stub tails, mottled fur versus 100 pounds for cougars with their long distinctive tails and consistent coat color) are caught occasionally in traps. To help monitor the range of these smaller predators—which have always been in Iowa—biologists have attached radio telemetry collars to about 20 such bobcats in south central Iowa before releasing (note: not re-introducing) them right back where they are living.

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DNR CLARIFIES AREAS ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER CLOSED TO FISHING

MANCHESTER – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources approved a number of new fishing regulations on the Mississippi River on Jan. 14, including closing all fishing in the tailwaters at three navigation dams from Dec. 1 through March 15, each year.

“We wanted to emphasize that the closure includes the main channel and main channel boarder areas, and does not apply to the backwaters and side channels in these zones,” said Dave Moeller, DNR regional fisheries supervisor for northeast Iowa.

The tailwaters closed to fishing are from Dam 11 at Dubuque downstream to the Highway 61/151 bridge; from Dam 12 at Bellevue downstream to the mouth of Mill Creek near river mile 556.0; and from Dam 13 at Clinton downstream to the downstream end of Stamp Island near river mile 521.5.

The effective date of these fishing closures varies. The Wisconsin and Iowa closure is already in effect. Illinois will effect these closures on April 1.

For more information, contact Moeller at 563-927-3276.

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PUBLIC INVITED TO DISCUSS FUTURE CONSTRUCTION OF LOST GROVE LAKE

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will hold a public meeting at 7 p.m., Jan. 28, at North Scott High School, 200 S. 1st Street, in Eldridge. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public of the DNR plan and schedule to construct a lake at Lost Grove Lake area, Scott County Iowa.

As part of the public meeting and in cooperation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service), the DNR is seeking public comments on its proposed plan. Commencing January 28, 2004 the DNR shall receive comments for a 30 day scoping period for the purpose of developing a project Environmental Assessment (EA). The completion of an EA is necessary in order for the Service to meet its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The NEPA requires the draft EA to consider at least two "Action" Alternatives and a "No Action" Alternative. The DNR is seeking comments regarding issues that should be addressed in the EA or additional alternatives that should be considered. The project's "Proposed Alternative" is to construct a 350 acre reservoir which will be approximately 3 miles long. Public access to the lake will include the development of three boat launch sites and eight shore fishing areas. Dam and facility construction is planned to commence by early 2005 and be completed in 2006. It is anticipated to take the lake two years to completely fill. Under the "No Action" Alternative, no lake would be completed and public land would be left in its present condition.

The DNR began purchasing land at the Lost Grove Lake site in 1988 and currently holds title to 1,682 acres. The DNR has taken initial steps to identify possible adverse project impacts. These steps include conducting field investigation for

threatened and endangered species, wetland determination in the proposed lake basin and to identify archaeological resources. A field investigation found no threatened or endangered species present. A wetland determination by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) found no wetlands present. The NRCS is also developing a watershed land use plan in efforts to minimize soil and nutrient delivery to the lake.

The DNR proposes to raise the elevation of 220th Avenue for public transportation. Utility companies have been contacted for the need to move or modify gas and electrical lines traversing under or over the lake basin.

The "Proposed Alternative" (PA) is also being reviewed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This alternative may effect all land in public ownership (1,682 acres) and have the greatest effect to 450 acres. The effected area includes inundating the 350 acre lake basin and earth moving activities associated with borrow areas, road developments, boat launching sites, shore fishing areas and fish habitat areas. Archeological investigations were conducted on the entire Lost Grove Lake area with emphasis on the most impacted areas related to lake inundation and earthmoving. Initial investigation identified 21 unreported archeological sites and one find spot and evaluated 3 farmsteads sites. Further work was conducted on a prehistoric archeological site thought to be potentially eligible for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Study conclusions recommend that none of the evaluated sites were eligible for the NRHP. The public is requested to inform the DNR about archeological sites, buildings and structures, historic places, cemeteries, and traditional uses of the area that could influence decisions about the proposed project.

Written comments on the proposed plan are welcome and can be submitted to Martin Konrad by traditional mail to: Department of Natural Resources, 502 East 9th Street, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319; or via fax (515-281-6794); or e-mail at: martin.konrad@dnr.state.ia.us. Comments shall be received by February 27, 2004.

For more information, contact Martin Konrad, Iowa DNR, at 515-281-6976.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of January 20, 2004

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Ice conditions continue to vary greatly across the state.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Ice thickness has been from 8-10 inches in most backwater lakes thanks to this last cold spell. Crappie and perch fishing has picked up. Crappies are being caught around the weed beds in **Bussey Lake**, Pool 10. Bass are being caught on tip-ups. Methodist Lake in Pool 10 has been accessible with 5 inches of ice on **Wyalusing Slough** and 8 inches on the lake. Fishing has been fair for bluegill and perch and 11 to 13-inch crappies. Pools 12 to 15: Ice conditions are still questionable. Use extreme caution and test the ice frequently. In Pool 12, crappie and bluegill are being caught in **Kehough** and **Fish Trap**. Reports from Pool 13, **Brown's Lake** anglers are catching crappie and bluegill. Most reports are of small fish but a few good catches are being reported. **Middle Sabula Lake** catches of bluegill and yellow perch are being reported; size is small with a few larger fish. **Lower Sabula Lake** reports of bluegill and crappie being caught in water from 3 foot to 24 foot deep, using wax worms. **Green Island complex**, a few fish are being caught in **Sawmill** and **McGanns**. **Michelsons** reports bluegill and occasional crappie are being caught. Pool 14, **Rock Creek area** is producing catches of crappie and bluegill. The morning bite is the best.

North Prairie Lake (Black Hawk): Fishing is good for rainbow trout on small jigs or wax worms. The DNR stocked 1,500 rainbow trout last week to create a winter trout fishery.

South Prairie Lake (Black Hawk): Anglers are catching bluegills on jigs tipped with a wax worm.

Big Woods Lake (Black Hawk): Fishing is fair for crappies on minnows.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at (563) 927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): There is still open water around the lake, so extreme caution is recommended if choosing to drive on the ice. Walleye anglers are fishing an area way out from Marble Beach, along Reeds Run on the east side, at the north end by Crandalls Beach, big Stoney Point and Mini-Wakan State Park. The preferred method is to use jigging raps, kastmasters or other lures tipped with minnows, minnow heads or perch eyes, when available. Yellow perch fishing has been kind of slow with some perch being caught on the north end at Crandalls Beach and Mini-Wakan State Park. Perch are also being caught north of Big Stoney Point. Use pilkees or jigs tipped minnow or wigglers. The area out from Angler's Bay Resort is still pretty good for some crappies. Also try at the North Grade in the weed lines using minnows. Anglers are also catching some bluegills at the North Grade along the weed lines using wax worms and smaller jigs.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Caution – open water areas at the Gull Point area and at the north end. Anglers are still catching bluegills and crappies in Millers Bay, fishing in 10 to 12 feet of water. There are still a few being caught at Smith's Bay by anglers fishing closer to shore. Try Pocahontas Point for bluegills. A few northern pike are being caught at Smith's, Miller's and Emerson bays using chubs. Yellow perch are being caught between Gull Point and Eagle Point at Spencer Beach in 10 to 12 feet of water.

Five Island (Palo Alto): Walleye are being caught at the north end of the third island late in the evening and into the night. There are some crappie being caught between the first island and the trestle.

Silver Lake (Palo Alto): Anglers are catching some yellow perch and northern pike on the south end of the lake.

Lake Pahoja (Lyon): Lots of smaller bluegills are being caught. A few channel catfish are being caught on small jigs tipped with a wax worm.

Dog Creek (O'Brien): A few black crappies are being caught in the evening.

Brushy Creek (Webster): The main lake has a lot of open water and thin ice. Anglers are catching a few sunfish and crappies at the north boat ramp and behind Taylor Island. Fish for walleyes before sunrise and after sunset.

Arrowhead Lake (Sac): Bluegill fishing is good throughout the lake. The fish are 7 to 8 inches.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Caution – there is a lot of open water, so use caution. Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair. Anglers are catching channel catfish in 20 feet of water off Ice House Point using wax worms. A few walleyes are being caught during the evening.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Yellow bass fishing is good. Yellows are being caught in the west end, out from Farmers Beach in 8 to 10 feet of water, around the island and Billy's Reef. Use minnows and jigging spoons for the best action. Try different spots until you locate fish. Walleye fishing is fair. Walleye in the 14 to 18-inch range, and a few larger, are being caught while fishing for yellow bass. Fish the sunset to early evening periods for the best chance at walleye.

Rice Lake (Winnebago-Worth): Yellow perch are hitting on minnows and small jigs. Many of the perch are small, so sorting is required.

Silver Lake (Worth): Yellow perch fishing is fair. Use small minnows and jigs for bait. Sorting is required to get larger fish.

Lake Cornelia (Wright): Yellow perch fishing is fair. Fish with minnows near the dredge cut on the north end of the lake.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at (712) 336-1840.

Southwest

Big Creek (Polk): Anglers report catching crappie and some bluegill in the area near the spillway using jigs. Fishing in the main portion of the lake is slow to fair for crappie, with the better area near the channel.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair with some fishing available at the fish house.

Don Williams (Boone): Crappie fishing is fair to good – try along the eastern part of the lake in the afternoon. Some bluegills are reported, although fishing is generally slow.

Hickory Grove (Story): Bluegill fishing has picked up and anglers are reporting some fair to good fishing.

Lake Red Rock (Marion): Anglers report walleye fishing in the tailwater of the dam has picked up. Try twister tails and jigs.

Farm ponds: Fishing is best on ponds. Ice conditions (3 to 8 inches) are generally good. Best fishing is for bluegill with some crappie in the larger ponds. Anglers need permission to fish on private ponds.

DeSoto Bend (Harrison): Ice thickness varies from 3 to 8 inches. Anglers are catching crappies and bluegills around structure at the south end of the lake.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Anglers are catching catfish, small bluegill and crappies on 3 to 7 inches of ice. The best place to fish is around brush piles.

Viking (Montgomery): Ice thickness varies from 3 to 9 inches. Anglers are catching small bluegills. Fishing is better toward evening.

Greenfield (Adair): Ice thickness varies from 5 to 7 inches. Fishing is good to for 7 to 8-inch bluegills.

Willow Lake (Harrison): The ice thickness is 8 inches. Anglers are catching a few bluegills. Fishing is better toward evening.

Three Mile (Union): Ice conditions have improved. Bluegill and crappies are being caught in the upper end. Some walleyes are being caught all over the lake.

Criss Cove (Madison) and the smaller county board areas are good for crappie and bluegill.

Icaria (Adams): Channel catfish is being caught through the ice.

Slip Bluff (Decatur), **Windmill** (Taylor), **Wilson** (Taylor), and **Fogle** (Ringgold) are all good for bluegill and crappie being caught through the 5 to 8 inches of ice.

Walnut Creek Marsh (Ringgold): Good for bluegill and some crappies.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, contact the regional office in Lewis at (712) 769-2587.

Southeast

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Ice thickness is about 4 to 5 inches. Bluegill fishing is fair in Sand Run. Fish the trees along the steep bank. Anglers are also picking up some crappies on minnows in Yankee chute.

Lake Geode (Henry): The ice is still questionable, but would be worth taking a look at later in the week if the cold weather persists.

Lake Darling (Washington): Ice thickness is about 5 to 6 inches. Look for the crappies over the brush piles in 8 to 10 feet of water.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): Ice thickness varies from 8 inches to 2 inches in the lower end of the lake. The big question is where 8 inches becomes 2. **Use extreme caution.**

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been biting on minnows and jigs. Fishing has been the best near underwater habitat around Honey Creek State Park boat ramp

Lake Wapello (Davis): Ice conditions have been extremely variable. Caution should be used.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Ice thickness has been about 5 inches. The majority of the fishing activity has been around the dam using minnows.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Bluegills have been biting on teardrop jigs tipped with a wax worm. Ice thickness has been about 6 inches.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Ice conditions are variable throughout the lake, with open water near the dam and Causeway Bridge area on the south arm. Ice conditions

vary from 3 to 6 inches. **Use caution and test ice regularly.** Fishing has been fair to slow; a few crappies and bluegills are being caught on ice flies tipped with wax worms and minnows around brush piles. Some sorting required for sizeable fish.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): Fishing has been fair for bluegills, crappie, and perch around the dam. Bluegills are also being caught around the roadbed on the west end. Some sorting is required for sizeable fish.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Watch out for poor ice around Mehaffey Bridge. Some anglers have been catching a few crappie throughout the reservoir, fishing has been slow...**Be sure to use caution and check ice often!**

Hannen Lake (Benton): Bluegill and crappie fishing has been fair to slow around the morning and evening hours on jigs tipped with wax worms. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited. Ice Fishing Tournament is scheduled for Jan. 31, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Hannen Lake. Contact Hannen Lake, Benton County Conservation Board, for further details 319-454-6382.

Rodgers Lake (Benton): Fishing has been fair for bluegills on jigs tipped with wax worms. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited. There is an ice fishing tournament scheduled for Jan. 25, from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Rodgers Lake. Contact Rodgers Lake, Benton County Conservation Board, for further details 319-472-4942.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Fishing has been slow. Crappie and bluegill have been caught in late afternoon on jigs tipped with wax worms fished around brush piles. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited. There is an ice fishing tournament scheduled for Jan. 31, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Diamond Lake. Contact Poweshiek County Conservation Board for further details 641-623-3191.

Washington and Keokuk County Ponds: Most ponds now have about 5 inches of ice. Bluegill fishing is fair to good. The fish seem to be between 1 and 2 ½ feet off the bottom. Fish a teardrop jig and wax worms over the habitat.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at (319) 694-2430.